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JIM BROWN OF LOCAL 10**

INTERVIEWEE: JIM BROWN

INTERVIEWERS: HARVEY SCHWARTZ

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[00:00:00] **HARVEY SCHWARTZ:** I'm with Jim Brown at this point. Jim, can you tell me where you were born, when you were born?

[00:00:28] **JIM BROWN:** Born Aberdeen, Scotland.

[00:00:29] **HARVEY:** When?

[00:00:33] **JIM:** Nineteen thirty-nine, April.

[00:00:38] **HARVEY:** What's it like growing up there?

[00:00:42] **JIM:** Great. I had a wonderful childhood in Scotland. Left school when I was 14—no I left school at 15.

[00:01:04] **HARVEY:** What did your dad do for work, before we get into school.

[00:01:09] **JIM:** I really didn't know my dad because my dad left not long after I was born. I was raised pretty much by my mother and my grandparents. When I left school, I went to work for one of the biggest companies in Aberdeen was Northern Co-operative that was a co-op that joined and you paid to an annual fee and you shopped at all their stores. Something like, is it Costco? Something similar to Costco. I went to work for them when I was fifteen—worked in the grocery department. And then when I was 17, my mother was always, "You have to get a trade, you have to get a trade." So I—in Scotland, a baker is a trade. I went to night school for oh, four years, night school for baking and cake decorating, confectionary. And then when I was about 22, I was already married and had one son, I decided that I didn't want to be a baker in Scotland.

So I researched Australia, South Africa, California, and New Zealand to see where—I wanted to go—I wanted to spend my life in the sunshine and there wasn't too much sunshine in Scotland. New Zealand didn't have that much sunshine either. Perth in Western Australia had a lot of sunshine but wages weren't too good. South Africa—I didn't go to South Africa because I felt that the racial imbalance, where you had 10 percent of the population governing 20 percent of the population was Black, I felt like there was going to be problems so I didn't go to there for that reason. California lucked out.

So I came to California and—well, actually I was going to go to New York, but the secretary of the bakers' union of Scotland did a world tour and I had to send my perspective on ports and documentation of my skills and when I went to the secretary of the union to get some documentation from him, he said, "Don't go to New York. Go to San Francisco." And so, he had the name and address of the secretary of the bakers' union in San Francisco and I contacted the secretary of the bakers' union in San Francisco and came over, got a job as a baker.

The first year I was here I opened my own donut shop—wasn't very successful. Ten cents for a cup of coffee and ten cents for a donut. I wasn't going no place! But, I had—one of my customers was a retired longshoreman and he come in for coffee and donut every morning and he says, "How you doing here?" And I told him, "Pff, wasting my time." But what I did do was, I didn't quit my job. I worked all night for Hostess Cake, making cupcakes and Twinkies, Suzy Q's, and Ho Ho's and I got off there at 5 o'clock in the morning zipped over to my donut shop, made my donuts and my coffee, and my wife, she serviced the customers. But anyway, this one customer, this longshoreman he came in, he says, "They're hiring on the docks. They're going to hire 700 B men."

[00:05:23] **HARVEY:** What year is this?

[00:05:25] **JIM:** Pardon?

[00:05:25] **HARVEY:** What year?

[00:05:25] **JIM:** 1967. “They’re going to hire 700 B-men. Go down and get an application.” I said, “I don’t know nothing about—” He says, “They’ll teach you.” About four months went by, he came in and he said, “You ever go down and get an application?” I said, “Nope.” “This is the last day, go down and get the application.” So, I went down and got the application and the reason I think—and they had 21,000 applications for the 700 jobs. The reason I got picked; two reasons: my application was—three reasons. They didn’t take anybody that had a prior industrial accident. I didn’t have any prior industrial—I didn’t know this at the time, but any application that ask you general questions, and the last question was, “What are your hobbies and recreations?” So I figured they wanted somebody that’s pretty physically fit so I put weight lifting, gymnastics, and swimming, which were all true actually. But anyway so I got a call. And the other factor is out of this 700 that they hired, there were about 20 British people, which was a very high percentage compared with the other ethnic groups in the area because there weren’t that many Brits but there were about 20 Brits that were hired in that 700. So I think that being

British, being really physically active, and not having any industrial accidents, that’s why I got chosen.

[00:07:18] **HARVEY:** Amazing. Let me ask you about your mom. She said you better get into a trade. What kind of work did she do?

[00:07:30] **JIM:** She was a textile worker. She was a garment presser. Garment pressing is really—she worked in a little cubicle about this size, had a steam press and they gave her clothes and it was really hot in that room. I went up to visit her a couple times when she was working. The working conditions were not good. Were not good.

[00:08:02] **HARVEY:** Was she in a union?

[00:08:05] **JIM:** I doubt it. I don’t know for sure.

[00:08:11] **HARVEY:** She still told you to get into a trade.

[00:08:13] **JIM:** Oh yes, she wanted me to get a trade because she—which was good advice!

[00:08:18] **HARVEY:** Sure. Yes, that’s important actually. Okay, where was your shop located? The donut shop?

[00:08:26] **JIM:** South San Francisco. Scotty’s Donuts! Pretty original.

[00:08:32] **HARVEY:** Hey, it seemed to work a little bit. And who is this guy who used to come in all the time?

[00:08:39] **JIM:** I don’t remember his name. It was a Swede—I remember it was Swedish. And when I came in the waterfront, the older guys, there were a lot of Scandinavians, the older guys.

[00:08:54] **HARVEY:** A bit of a tradition. So you get in in 1967, tell me about your first day on the job on the waterfront.

[00:09:03] **JIM:** Yes, first day on the job I got a job as a lumper. That’s the truckers would come in—I was unloading either apples or oranges in boxes, they opened up the back of the truck, and put up a pallet board, you load it up with pallet boards and you walk further back into the truck but then put rollers and rolled them down.

That was my first job in the waterfront was a lumper. It was a big difference in 1967 to today because everybody was down in the hold. It was all—all what we call “hand jive.” You picked up the boxes and put ‘em on the pallet boards.

Now, gang structure, I don’t know if you know how the gang structure worked. You usually had eight men for loading and six men for discharge. We all liked to get loading jobs because you could work four and four. Four guys would keep up with the operation, the bosses—the bosses were wonderful. As long as the boxes were moving they didn’t care if there was one guy throwing them as long as the boxes were going on the ship at a reasonable rate, they didn’t bother you at all. I think that actually reflected onto the guys really wanting to keep up with the quota that they were anticipating because we got to be our own bosses pretty much as long as we did it. It was really great. It’s changed now, a lot.

And then I worked my way up to being a gang boss. Another thing that you might be interested in is that we had a—in the contract, you had to have 800 hours for a qualified year but you had to have 1,300 hours for your benefits. So I was what they call, I used to work numbers. That means I would work someone else’s number for them. Now the reason this came about is that a lot of the older guys couldn’t do the work anymore and they couldn’t get their 1,300 hours because if they lost the 1,300 hours they lost their medical. So a few of us other guys, I would get my 1,300 hours by June. After June, I would work—I would still do some of my own but if somebody came up to me and said, “Brown, can you get me some hours?” I would go out under their number and use their name and the bosses all knew about it, the bosses knew exactly what was going on and they cooperated, I mean the walking bosses. I had one walking boss say to me one time, “Don’t you ever work your own number?” [laughs]

And the way it worked was that I got the money for the job and they got the benefits. And it was—and I really messed up badly for myself because I was a gang boss. I was the youngest gang boss in San Francisco at one time. And because I was the youngest gang boss, they were breaking up the gangs! They were going to cut the gang, say from 10 down to 12, so eight gangs. So the eight, youngest gang bosses or the eight, the last gang bosses, the last eight gang bosses that were made their gangs were going to be chopped. Well, I had a handicapped dockman. And so, I said to the other dockman who had a lot more seniority than me, I said, “I’ll tell you what, just to keep the gang and so the other guy wouldn’t have to go back to the hall,” because he was panicking and saying, “I can’t go back to hall, I can’t do it.” I said, “Okay.” So I made arrangements with his partner on the dock I said, “You take the gang and I’ll go on the dock. That way we got an old gang boss.” So that’s what we did. He was the first guy that I worked his number for him, just so he can get his hours so he could keep his medical. And then once word got out other guys went up to me, “Hey Brown, can you help me get some hours?”

But I did myself a big disservice because when I gave up the gang, PMA [Pacific Maritime Association] would not give me another gang. It took them like, oh I would say, another 10 years before I got another gang. They wouldn’t give me a gang. I didn’t like being a gang boss anyway but that’s beside the point! [laughs]

[00:15:11] **HARVEY:** Why didn’t you like it?

[00:15:16] **JIM:** I was fairly, I still am, I’m fairly—I try to do the right thing, by that I mean that the company’s paying me a good wage, I felt I had to produce. Unfortunately, some guys who would get the jobs at out of the hall, they had a different opinion. So I kept on getting into—well, not kept, but I got into a few confrontations

with guys because they didn't want to work the way I wanted them to. So being on the waterfront, our diction can be quite abusive. So, it didn't bother me because I felt good because I felt like I was helping somebody, at the same time I wasn't too crazy about the gang boss job. But if I stayed in the gang boss job, it would've propelled me to be walking boss and other things that I missed out on. Having said that, I didn't miss a hell of a lot because I still had—as a regular longshoreman I was still doing awfully, awfully good.

[00:16:30] **HARVEY:** Yes. One thing that occurred to me is if you were working but not on your number, did you lose social security benefits because your income would be shown?

[00:16:42] **JIM:** No. Everything went to the other guy all I got was cash. He got the social security.

[00:16:50] **HARVEY:** Right. But you didn't get the social security?

[00:16:53] **JIM:** I got nothing.

[00:16:55] **HARVEY:** So you lost a little bit on social security?

[00:16:57] **JIM:** No, I get maximum social security anyway.

[00:17:00] **HARVEY:** Anyway, it worked out okay.

[00:17:02] **JIM:** Not quite, I'm a few dollars short on maximum social security. Want to hear about that story?

[00:17:08] **HARVEY:** Sure.

[00:17:12] **JIM:** We came in to what they call "pay guarantee"?

[00:17:15] **HARVEY:** Yes. PGP.

[00:17:17] **JIM:** PGP. Well—okay, when PGP first came out PMA did not pay into social security on the PGP hours. And one of the active, we'll say, union members, he sued them and he won. And so PMA had to make up all the social security. There was a catch though. No, what they had to do was they had to pay in the money that they didn't pay into the social security that they should have, it was put into a lump sum on the side. So when you retired some guys got as much as \$30,000+ of what we called "PGP" money. I got 20,000 myself. But the catch was if you collected the maximum in social security you had not been damaged, so you didn't get the money. You follow? So I, being Scottish, I figured out that I would not get maximum, so I get my 20 grand that was sitting there. So I maybe 20 dollars short of the maximum social security, so I could get that stuff.

[00:18:47] **HARVEY:** But you got the 20,000?

[00:18:51] **JIM:** I got the 20 grand! I sure did! It's all gone. [laughs]

[00:18:54] **HARVEY:** Well, what year did you get to be an A-card longshoreman?

[00:19:01] **JIM:** Oh I did great in that. The '67 guys all got the A-books within two years. When I went to work on the waterfront there was 6,000 A- and B-members. As a B-member, we got jobs, three, four jobs a week.

Maybe seven jobs a week? We never got less than three jobs. It was set up different then, the sign in, the day before. Anyway, the membership today as you probably know is, in San Francisco, is less than a thousand A-men. And they probably have maybe, I would think, 200 to 300 B-men, if that many. And they have IDs and un-IDs. I have a problem with that situation. A and B's are okay, C and D—I think the union gave up a lot when they allowed PMA to have casuals because as I said, when I went on work on the waterfront, the worst week I ever got was three days. An unidentified casual in the Port of San Francisco—three years ago, I was talking to you—it was actually published in one of the papers. An unidentified casual in the port of San Francisco in 1911, no in 2011, right? For the year, was like 56 hours.

[00:21:18] **HARVEY:** For the year?

[00:21:19] **JIM:** For the year. Whereas a Class A longshoreman, over 2,000 hours a year. So, I really feel that that was a big debt to the union because what caused that is that PMA, in their endeavor to reduce their costs, did that by bringing in the casuals and by giving the class A and B longshoreman substantial wage increases, which I benefited from, but by reducing the size of the membership, they went from paying up A and B salaries from 6,000 [people] to less than down to a little less than 1,000 or both, at the expense of the casuals. Now the casuals, they're probably get about two days a week. But it's not much fun getting up to go to the hall, seven days a week only to get two days work out of it. You spend more time in the hall than you do working. And so I think even if—so, longshoreman A and B are—they're in tall cotton. But the guys on the other end are—I think PMA did a good job for PMA. They reduced their costs dramatically and in my opinion, if Harry Bridges saw the set up now as it is, he'd turn over in his grave.

[00:23:30] **HARVEY:** Is any of that due to containerization and mechanization? The reduction?

[00:23:35] **JIM:** Oh, mechanization. Again that falls into the same category where by PMA reduced the labor force, I mean it was all about—anytime an industry has an expensive labor force, the industry will reduce or try to eliminate that labor force. And the strategy that they did was containerization. That was the big thing.

But having said all that, if you're Class A or Class B longshoreman, you're in good shape. If you're an ID, you're in good shape. But unidentified casuals. [shakes head] They should eliminate that category. That category should be eliminated.

[00:24:41] **HARVEY:** If you look at it from the perspective of the union in one sense, those people get so few hours, they're so marginal, it's not something that you can bargain over and put everything on the line for to get rid of them now the way it is. I mean it seems to me in terms of bargaining structure and strategy.

[00:25:05] **JIM:** Is it that a big of an advantage for the company? To have a labor for they're only going to use a little over a week?

[00:25:14] **HARVEY:** What do they care? They don't care what happens to these guys.

[00:25:20] **JIM:** I think they need to level the playing field! As you keep talking about it! I think it would be a lot better if the wealth was distributed a little more evenly, like it was when I was down there.

[00:25:46] **HARVEY:** You're there when they transitioned from cargo to containerization?

[00:25:53] **JIM:** Hand jive to containers.

[00:25:55] **HARVEY:** What's it like, observing the transition or being a part of it?

[00:25:59] **JIM:** Oh boy. Wow. Mmm. Containerization is harder work. If you're a lasher—lashers, I mean, that's hard work. That is really hard.

[00:26:18] **HARVEY:** How so?

[00:26:21] **JIM:** Well...

[00:26:22] **HARVEY:** We kind of know but we want it in your words.

[00:26:27] **JIM:** Okay, in my words, it's a ball breaker. I have had jobs where I couldn't go to work the next day. I laid in a hot tub of water, soaking, just to ease up my muscles. Again, the bad thing about it—well, the good thing about it, the bad thing—you don't get those bad jobs every day. You might get a bad job once a month. But when you got a bad job, it was a bad job.

[00:27:01] **HARVEY:** Why was it hard doing lashing?

[00:27:04] **JIM:** Oh my god.

[00:27:06] **HARVEY:** Let me be naive about it so you could describe it in your words.

[00:27:09] **JIM:** Okay, when lashing first came out it was the worst because the lashing is they put the containers on deck, right? And they do one tier, well, when they first came out they lashed the first tier. Well, why would you want to lash the first tier? It sits on cones and the cones locks them. You don't need to lash them, but they lash them. But anyway, they lash the second tier. I could see lashing the second tier, I could see lashing the third tier. Even

though you have locking cones to lock them on. And then the fourth tier.

Now, the length of the rod for the first tier is like eight feet. The length of the rod for the second tier is still eight feet because it only goes up a little bit. But the length of the rod for the third tier is at 16 feet and steel, so they're heavy and they got a little hole this big that you've got to get that little knob into and you're down there and you're trying to get that knob and you're holding up this pole that's stainless steel that's 16 feet that probably weighs about 40 pounds and you're trying to get it into this knob.

Now, Hanjin was a shipping line, they had a ship that came in that had 124 rods of bay and it had 12 to 16 bays. And, well on the Hanjin they gave us four lashers on the side. So you had four lashers, what was it, 36 rods a piece and again, you could lash a bay in between an hour to an hour-and-a-half. And you also had those turnbuckles, don't forget. Them suckers weighed about 40 pounds too! They're a little bit lighter now but when they first came out the turnbuckles used to be this tall. [stands up] Turnbuckles were the same height as you. Matson had the heaviest.

So, then, I'll tell you a story. I got a job, one night after the ladies came on the waterfront. And there was this

lady called Sheila. She was a bitch! Anyway, Sheila—I got a job off the hot sheet. I used to sign what they used to call the “hot sheet.” Do you know where the hot sheet is? The hot sheet is where if you don’t get a job you sign a piece of paper and the night dispatcher, if there was a replacement, they would add somebody and they would call you at home. I got a call at home to go to SeaLand. I went to SeaLand and the walking boss says, “Brown, just hang around until your partner gets here and then you can go up on the ship.” So who shows up for my partner but Sheila. Okay so we go up on the ship now. We lash the second tier. Okay, go up and lash the second tier, me and Sheila. I go up 11 boxes, that’s 22 rods. I hung 20. Sheila got on two.

So I go over and I tighten—after you hang them you have to tighten them. So I tighten two. So I go to the offshore side of the ship and I’m looking at the water—a tap on the shoulder, it’s Sheila. “How come you’re not tightening?” I said, “Well, I hung 20. You hung two. So I’ll tighten two and you can tighten 20.” Tightening is a lot easier than the hanging. So five minutes later up comes a walking boss. He says, “Sheila says you’re not doing your fair share.” So I thought, maybe—I got along great with—I was probably not the best longshoreman in San Francisco but I was most popular with the bosses. They used to tell me, “Hey Brown, we got a ship coming in tomorrow, see if you can catch it.” Anyway, he says, “Brown, go to the bathroom and then keep on going to lunch.” That was a cute story.

[00:32:12] **HARVEY:** That was a cute story.

[00:32:16] **JIM:** I got a lot of good stories, a lot of good stories like that.

[00:32:23] **HARVEY:** How about other women? How was it like working with other women?

[00:32:32] **JIM:** I think that women cannot do the heavy jobs. They can’t hang the pipe rods. Okay, I’m not saying that they can’t—nine out of ten can’t. But women in general, if they took the easier jobs like on the dock walking combs or doing that, they work fine. I’m going to be pretty blunt here with you fellas. There’s a saying on the waterfront now, that’s very—the waterfront has turned a lot of women into prostitutes.

[00:33:18] **HARVEY:** How so?

[00:33:20] **JIM:** Because women would [pauses] offer favors to partners if they would let them—see, a lot of guys there didn’t want to work with women because as I said, the heavy, and when you go to work on the waterfront you get the heavy jobs. So only when you’re there for a long time you get the easier jobs. So when they came in they had to do the heavy jobs so they would offer favors to the fellas if they would be their partners. That was rampant.

By that I mean that they—I’ll give you a good—I have a lady friend who was a longshore person and I used to work with her, partners quite often, and one guy came up to me and he says, “You working partners with”—Gloria was her name—“You working partners with Gloria tonight?” And I said “Yeah.” He said, “We got a lot of women in the waterfront but we only have one lady, Gloria.” And also within the walking bosses—would take care of them. That’s how it worked. And it still is.

[00:35:11] **HARVEY:** Do you have any questions regarding these set of issues?

[00:35:16] **CONOR:** Well, I do have a question about solidarity actions. It seems as though—

[00:35:21] **JIM:** Oh, I think solidarity was greater in '67 when I went down. I think a thing that has weakened solidarity is steady-men because once you become steady, they become more loyal to the company than to the union. It's different when you go to the hall every day, there's a lot of comradery, a lot of comradery. But when you start to go steady and I would imagine that out of the 900 A-men we have, oh well over half of 'em are probably steady-men. Well over half of them.

[00:36:20] **HARVEY:** Did you ever go steady? Did you work steady at all?

[00:36:23] **JIM:** No. I never went steady. I only drove two things at the waterfront. Forklift and a hustler. So steady-men all drive equipment, I didn't want to drive equipment. There was a reason for that. The reason was that I put myself in a slow moving category. Do you know what a "slow moving category" is? That's where there is not too much work opportunity in that category, such as dock preference. Do you know what "dock preference" is?

Okay, dock preference is a board for older fellas and people who that have been injured. That is a slow moving category and for the last, I would say, maybe the last five or six years I was on the dock preference. But, when you are on the dock preference, we had pay guarantee. I think it was like 38 hours pay guarantee a week. But on dock preference you would maybe only get two jobs. So, you still got paid for 38 hours but you only get two jobs on the dock preference. So what was your question?

[00:38:05] **CONOR:** I'm kind of wondering that one of the interesting things about the longshore union is that they often have an international perspective, in that they do solidarity actions. You know, civil rights, you know, that kind of stuff. I was just wondering if you. . .

[00:38:14] **JIM:** Yes, well they basically—I think part of the comradery, I would say in the waterfront, because as I explained to you with working numbers, I mean there was a lot of guys helping out other guys, so when you have that kind of thing going on you had a lot of good comradery, and especially—all the bosses were all in on it too! That's been done for, shit, I would say—well, I probably 45 when I was a gang boss. No, I was younger than that. I was maybe 38 when I was a gang boss, until I was 40. So from 40 to 65, I worked a lot of numbers for guys. But you don't have that today because everybody's steady. There are no more longshoreman who can't do the job because they're the non-IDs and the IDs. So comradery has gone down from position and—the longshore really sets an example to other trade unions of what can be accomplished. As I said, my only gripe is the situation with the IDs and the non-IDs. Other than that, they need to equalize the work—not the pay, but equalize the work opportunity like it was when I was in the waterfront. Work opportunity was equalized. It would be fine if—the only thing I've got a gripe with is non-IDs. I think it's terrible.

[00:40:17] **HARVEY:** What do you think of the—what did you do during the '71 strike?

[00:40:21] **JIM:** I picketed! I picketed in the '71, I was at Pier 32. Cute story. It lasted six months. And it was the same group of guys that were there with me for the whole six months, you know? We would talk and I would always remember this guy. He says—we were all talking about our problems that we were having, this guy says, "My wife's left me." I said to him, "Are you bragging or complaining?" [laughs] I'll always remember this one Black fellow. [laughs] Another cute story. He's sitting there, he comes in and he were really upset, he said, "I got a call from my one creditors that I hadn't paid him in three months and I told him, I told him 'I put my bills in the hat and every month I pull out the bills that I can pay and I pay them. His bill's still in the hat. He'll get it

when I get to it.” [laughs]

[00:42:07] **HARVEY:** What about the apartheid?

[00:42:08] **JIM:** Oh, I think that Leo did a great job on that. Leo was really—we all supported that. Leo was the leader and he did a good job on it. I like Leo.

[00:42:29] **HARVEY:** It's Leo Robinson?

[00:42:30] **JIM:** Yes, Leo Robinson. I only got one problem with Leo. Leo liked to hear Leo talk. Man, he would get on a mic at a union meeting and I'd go, “Oh, shit, we're going to be here until 10 o'clock now.” [laughs] But he was a hell of a union man. I actually worked partners with his—I liked him when he worked for his partner. His partner's wife here, Gloria. She's here. Leo's partner—anyway, his partner had—he was working waterfront but he got his Real Estate Brokers license. And I, only later on, I got my real estate salesman's license later on when I was probably about in my fifties. So I went and worked for Leo, part-time, and Leo would be—we all took care of the waterfront first, that was first, that was our main job. Leo actually gave me a job as a—but, unfortunately his real estate office didn't work out too good for him. But he developed a brain tumor and died.

[00:43:43] **HARVEY:** Yes, I'm aware of that. They had a wonderful memorial for him at Local 10, which I attended.

Around '84 I think it was they had a quickie strike, well, not a quick strike, a walkout strike for about ten days, over apartheid. Do you remember that at all? Did you participate in that?

[00:44:06] **JIM:** No. I don't remember that. What I remember about that era is that a ship came into Pier 50 and we wouldn't work it because it had cargo from South Africa, and we wouldn't work it. And I think I was actually dispatched. I think, the union had to dispatch you to the ship but when the guys got there, they wouldn't go to work. To protect the legal contract and everything the union had to dispatch. Once you got there, the guys would not turn to it to, as we say. The guys wouldn't turn to it. And I remember—you sure there was a strike? Or they just struck the South African ship?

[00:45:06] **HARVEY:** Yes. I'm sorry you're right. Just a—

[00:45:07] **JIM:** It wasn't a strike. We did struck just that ship. And I believe—

[00:45:13] **HARVEY:** It was something Lloyd. Do you remember? It was called the um, something Lloyd.

[00:45:18] **JIM:** Probably Lloyd ship line—there was a ship line. . .

[00:45:23] **HARVEY:** It was only the South African vessel.

[00:45:25] **JIM:** Anyway. After the ship left I believe it went to Canada and dockers up here wouldn't work it either. And finished up in Australia. I don't know if they took it. But that was—everybody felt good about that, everybody felt good about that.

[00:45:53] **HARVEY:** What major issues have we missed? What do you think we missed that was important in discussing these matters with you?

[00:46:09] **JIM:** Well, I think that the comradery you see in the Pensioners, it's similar to the comradery of '67. Having said that, the current officials we have, I'm talking about the active officials, are wonderful. We couldn't do any better. They're sincerely concerned about everybody that works in the waterfront. That's quite possibly in the not too distant future, we will see some changes being made to the work opportunity situation because they're aware of the inequity of it. So I'm very confident that—no, everything has ebb and flow and I think it'll come back to—as long as they retain a hiring hall. If they give up the hiring hall—the waterfront has all industries. We have fantastic comradery for all industries. It's really a brotherhood in the waterfront. Like everything else we all have internal problems, and as our slogan says, “An injury to one is an injury to all.”

I made a motion last year that we have a situation in the—it's throughout the whole United States, but not Canada. Canada has what they call parity, pension parity. We don't have that in the United States. And I can up here first time 10 years ago and I said, “Why can't we have pension parity?” And I got told, “You can't have pension parity it'll never happen because of this and that and that.” So it's been 10 years now but last year I made a motion that, see, everybody who retired before 202 is getting about pretty close to half the pension that those are getting who are retired now. So I made a motion last year that all pension money, nothing to go to the current retirees, all pension money go towards bringing up the old, old timers, and it passed unanimously.

So, the guys who are retiring now they're giving up, something that I think they're not all that entitled too, because I was the one who set it up, but you can check the contract and see but I'm pretty sure that the officials we have there are on board. So we're not going to get parity but we're going to get a substantial increase to bring us up into a more level playing field. But, having said that, okay, as I said 10 years ago I said I was in favor of parity, but if we get a good substantial increase in this contract for the old timers, we're halfway there! Because the next contract, I'll be back, and we got to bring them up some more so everybody—because as I see it, you see like, this is my opinion is that I want to work in the waterfront '67. So the waterfront in '67, the actual wages were \$34 a day. I was a baker. So I was making ten cents an hour more as a baker than I was as a longshoreman at the time. And there were four of us that got jobs who worked in Hostess Cake. The four of us got hired in the waterfront but only two of us came because at that time the baker was making ten cents an hour more. Now, there's no comparison.

[00:51:11] **HARVEY:** Well if you were making more as a baker how come you decided for the waterfront?

[00:51:26] **JIM:** I didn't give up my baker's job. I took the job on the waterfront and, as I said, as a B-man, we were getting about three days a week. Now, as a B-man you also have to maintain a, what they call, “availability.” We'll just say that I got an average of four days a week. Well I'll have to have a 50 percent availability, so I would only need to work two days to be in good standing with everybody. So when I first came on the waterfront I treated it more as a part-time job and then eventually I dropped the—after a couple, I did it for a couple of years and then after that I dropped the bakery and went to work on the waterfront. And in a couple of years, the waterfront had already passed the bakery. But the other guy that came from the bakery did the same thing as I did, but the other two decided to stay at the bakery.

[00:52:37] **HARVEY:** What year did you retire Jim?

[00:52:40] **JIM:** What year did I retire?

[00:52:41] **HARVEY:** Yes.

[00:52:42] **JIM:** Oh, 1999.

[00:52:43] **HARVEY:** Nineteen ninety-nine?

[00:52:46] **JIM:** Nineteen ninety-nine, yes. I'm 75.

[00:52:49] **HARVEY:** Right. How old were you in 1999?

[00:52:52] **JIM:** Sixty-four.

[00:52:54] **HARVEY:** So you retired at 64.

[00:53:05] **JIM:** I was working with a lady longshore person. You know those big cranes? Okay. We were laying out timber blocks. There were probably about a foot square and about six feet long. And she wasn't all that robust. But anyway, we were laying them out and what happened was they were using—okay, it was a sort of longshore and . . . waterfront engineers, whatever they were. We were going to take off one of the big cranes off the ship and they were going to be rolling it on this log [inaudible] or whatever, but they had, we'll say, a different union handling the operation of bringing it down. We were doing more of the menial jobs and they had their crane driver bringing up parts. Well, it was what they call a whirley girdy crane, do you know what that is, a whirley girdy?

[00:54:29] **HARVEY:** A whirley crane, yes.

[00:54:34] **JIM:** Yes, one of them cranes. He was coming down on top of our heads. You see, on the waterfront you don't bring out cargo until everybody is standing clear. Well they were doing that, well they were bringing stuff up over our heads. And in this particular instance he was coming right down. I presumed he was going to stop when he got down so low but he was getting pretty close to the top of their heads. So I yelled to the lady at the other end, I said, "Throw the block." And I threw with all the strength I had and she ran one way and I ran, but when I threw the block, I tore my shoulder. And I was off for six months. It was my first injury on the waterfront that I was off for sick leave.

So when the doctor was going to sign me off, he says, "Now you're 61." He says, "I can sign you out to go back to work or I can put you on permanent disability. Whatever you want to do." And I said, "I'll take the permanent disability. That's why I came out at 61." So I'm 75 now. So, I was 61. That would leave us at '99. And so, that's pretty much what happened. So again, I'm not saying nothing against the lady but if I had a male heavier, more physical guy on the other end, I wouldn't have to throw that block so hard. But it's all water under the bridge.

[00:56:31] **HARVEY:** Conor, do you have any other questions?

[00:56:34] **JIM:** I said too much already.

[00:56:36] **HARVEY:** You covered a lot.

[00:56:40] **CONOR:** You covered everything really well.

[00:56:44] **HARVEY:** Any final statements you'd like to make? Any looking back, 'what it all meant' statement?

[00:56:53] **JIM:** I had a fabulous life. I have had a wonderful—I've worked with some wonderful guys. I've been really, really blessed and I only met Harry Bridges once but if I look back at my life, everything I have today is what him and his group achieved. I think that our group had achieved a lot too. I think that the reason we have the IDs and non-IDs is that the administrations of that time didn't do quite such a good job as they could have or

didn't foresee what was going on. But I think this group that we got, maybe the second coming of Harry Bridges, because they—he's already gone to jail over the—

[00:58:13] **HARVEY:** You're talking about Big Bob?

[00:58:14] **JIM:** Yes, Big Bob, I got a lot of respect for him. But, hey, life goes on and ILWU is really on the forefront of labor as far as labor is concerned and I am the luckiest guy in the world to have joined. I took that Swede's advice. [laughs] And I went down there to get that job just to shut him up. I said I don't want to listen to this guy every morning he comes here and goes, "When are you gonna...?" But it's surprising how I got the donut job, the donut shop didn't do diddly. But through the donut shop, I got to the waterfront. I mean I didn't know what I was getting into and it's been a fabulous life, fabulous. I always had money. My family's done well. Just—I'm a happy guy. You could probably see I'm a happy guy. [laughs]

And I'm not tooting my own horn, but I was pretty popular with the bosses. Not that I was a good worker, I was dependable. I'll give you a good story. We were unloading automobiles—and two walking bosses, "Oh God, we got 40 guys to watch," 80 guys dispatched and two walking bosses. He says, "My gosh, 80 guys." Because the guys used to slip away, they would lay back and wouldn't do—and the walking boss says to the other guy, says, "No you don't. You don't have to watch 40 guys." The guy says, "Yeah, I do." He says, "No, you don't." You only have watch 39. You got Brown. You don't have to watch Brown." I felt good about that.

Another good story of comradery that really touches me. I used to like driving automobiles, wasn't too heavy of a job and I like driving cars. The autoships have ramps, as I was coming down the ramps I just nicked this car, nicked a corner of it. Just this much, you know. [holds up fingers] But you damage a car you're fired, which is no big deal. You're fired for the day. You go back home get a job another day. This is what, 10 o'clock, a little bit before lunchtime. And I nicked a car and one of the guys comes over and says, "Don't leave, we're calling the BA [business agent], don't leave." And Steve, Steve Bate was the BA, so he come. He takes me up onto the ship where the superintendent is and the superintendent says, "How about putting Brown back to work?" "You know the rules, I can't put Brown back to work." And the superintendent had his back to the dock. There were 20 drivers on the job and he said, "Well, if you don't put Brown back to work, I don't think you're going to get your ship unloaded." When the superintendent turned around all of the guys were out of the cars had their arms crossed. The superintendent says, "Ok, go back to work." So that was a very memorable moment in my life. A

lot of good guys. For a regular guy, I had a fantastic life. My kids did well.

[01:02:38] **HARVEY:** What did your kids do?

[01:02:40] **JIM:** Oh, my son is retired already. He was the president of the largest commercial real estate company in the world. My daughter is a teacher in Oregon—no, Washington. She's a teacher in Washington. I'm going to say this, I'm going to interject this, I think that, ethics has a lot to do with it.

[01:03:28] **HARVEY:** What is it?

[01:03:28] **JIM:** Ethics.

[01:03:29] **HARVEY:** Oh sure.

[01:03:29] **JIM:** I think your personal ethics has a lot to do with it. Everybody called me, "Mr. Brown." I didn't think nothing about it at the time but looking back on it, maybe it was some kind of respect.

But anyway. I hope I've given you enough for the book you're writing or whatever your writing.

[01:03:55] **HARVEY:** You've done great.

[01:03:56] **JIM:** Maybe you should change my name. [laughs] I might've stamped on some people's toes. That might be vindictive.

[01:04:11] **HARVEY:** We hope not.

[01:04:13] **JIM:** Okay. That's it! Okay, good.

[01:04:15] **HARVEY:** Much appreciated.

[01:04:16] **JIM:** Likewise.